

# Glass Menagerie a disappointment

**The Glass Menagerie**  
Citadel, Maclab Stage  
March 9 - 16

by Olga Jagodnik

As much as I love the work of Tennessee Williams, the production of his play *The Glass Menagerie*, at the Maclab Theatre (at the Citadel) is something of a disappointment.

Written in 1945, and set in St. Louis, much of the play, under William Fisher's weak direction, is lost in its transposition to an Edmonton audience in 1985. What should have been intense drama dissipated to mere comedy: what was intended to be comedic was lost to the audience.

*The Glass Menagerie* is the story of a family whose matriarch, a product of a Southern childhood, is trying to instil in her children

the antiquated morals and values of her own lost generation. Amanda Wingfield, played by Ann Casson, has to raise her two children by herself, ever since her husband walked out of the house 16 years before. A picture of him hangs prominently on the wall and is often referred to by members of the family when they talk of changing their lives.

Amanda has great but confused vitality. She tells her 23-year-old daughter Laura (Laurie Paton) after one dinner that she must stay fresh and pretty in case there are "gentleman callers". When told they weren't expecting any callers, Amanda replies, as if back in her own youth, "Sometimes they come when they are at least expected! Why, I remember one Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain —." She relates the story as if for the hundredth time.

Casson does an admirable work of playing the long-suffering but pitiless Amanda. Her

Southern accent, modulation and tone are near-perfect except for slips of the grand English she's more accustomed to. However, Casson's self-control is too good; there is an overwhelming feeling that more appropriate to the role would be the extreme impatience, easy anger of a woman who become somewhat paranoid in her treatment of her wayward children.

The play begins with son Tom (Stuart Hughes) as narrator, setting the stage to a time in the 1930s, in St. Louis, in the midst of a dissolving economy. He says that he has tricks in his pocket but unlike a stage magician who gives the illusion that has the appearance of truth, "I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion." He is turning back time, to that quaint period when the "huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind."

Laura Wingfield's situation is even graver than that of Amanda. A childhood illness has left her crippled, but none of the family allow the fact. She remembers that in high school the brace she wore "clumped down the halls loud as thunder." Laura's separation from those around her is severely aggravated by her condition. By the time we meet her, she is like a piece of her own glass collection, which her mother has named "the glass menagerie." Like glass, Laura is too exquisitely fragile to remove from the shelf.

Tom works in a shoe factory and writes poetry on the shoeboxes in all his spare moments. For the adventure he craves, he goes to the movies every night. He dreams of

being a sailor at sea, but faithfully keeps his job at the warehouse until the time when he, like his father who deserted the family, will be able to escape.

As Tom Wingfield, Hughes has all the intensity which the anger and frustration of his unhappy life demand. His performance is even more effective because he holds his anger in check. At the same time, it is difficult to discern his real emotions in terms of his sister and mother.

Laurie Paton as the daughter is tremulous, nervous and scared as a rabbit trying to outwit the hound. Stammering replies to all questions put to her by her gentleman caller, played by Francis Damberger, she is completely pitiable. Paton's performance is truly remarkable.

Damberger's portrayal of the outwardly insensitive high school hero is effective. You could not help the inward shudder as he flexes his muscles to his shadow on the wall. But you must laugh at his obvious harmlessness. He is a pampered, lovable idiot whose ultimate sensitivity is acutely unexpected.

The lighting of the stage is most effective, giving a distinct feeling that the scenes on stage are fragments of memory in Tom's life. Toward the end of the play, all lighting but that of the candlelight is eliminated (Tom has taken the utility money and used it to pay his merchant marine's union fee). Then, finally, Tom tells Laura to blow out the candles — "for nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura — and so good-bye...."



The Album Playlist is based on Airplay — a combination of programmer preference and listeners' requests. Tune in every Sunday at 12:00 for the Alternative Countdown — the favorite albums, EP's singles and tapes.

### Singles, EP's & Tapes

1. *The Dusty Claps* — Yukon Buddy (tape)
2. *This Fear* — Soldier of this Fashion (tape)
3. *Simple Minds* — Don't You (forget about me) (Virgin/Polygram)
4. *Moral Support* — Stamp Day for Dancing (TGO/RCA)
5. *Junior Gone Wild* — Down & Out (tape)
6. *Mary Jane Girls* — In my House (Motown/Quality)
7. *Third World* — Sense of Purpose (Columbia/CBS)
8. *Van Morrison* — Tore Down a la Rimbaud (Mercury/Polygram)
9. *Stepford Husbands* — Why Aren't You There (Cryptovision)
10. *Deprogrammers* — Fear of Success (Cryptovision)

### TOP 10 ALBUMS

1. *Jason & the Scorchers* — Lost and Found (EMI)
2. *Various Artists* — Rhythm of Resistance (Shanachie/Boot)
3. *Rebirth Jazz Band* — Here to Stay (Arctoolie)
4. *The Del-Lords* — Frontier Days (EMI)
5. *Psyche* — Insomnia Theatre (Malignant)
6. *Lloyd Cole & the Commotions* — Rattlesnakes (Geffen/WEA)
7. *The Pool* — 333 (Enigma)
8. *Muddy York* — Scatter the Ashes (Boot)
9. *Velvet Underground* — Vu (Verve/Polygram)
10. *Darkroom* — A Test of Time (WEA)

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All activities take place in the Students' Union Building (5th lobby, Olmstead lounge, 508 theatre).  
Wednesday, March 20, 1985  
Thursday, March 21, 1985  
11 am to 3 pm

- African Students' Association
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- Arab Students' Association
- Caribbean Student Association
- Central American Campus Committee
- Chinese Library Association
- Chinese Students' Association
- Hillel Students' Organization
- Filipino University Students' Association
- International Students' Centre
- Korean Students' Association
- Malaysian and Singaporean Students' Association
- U of A Native Student Club
- U of A Nishiren Shoatsu Soka Gakkai Students' Club
- Nigerian Union of Students
- North American Jewish Students Network
- U of A Scandinavian Club
- Punjabi Students' Association
- Bangladeshi Students' Association
- Canadian India Youth Society

- information tables
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- food fair
- costumes from places around the world

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